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ABSTRACT

Educators concerned with improving educational opportunities for the gifted need to consider ways to achieve their ends within the realities of the political system. Federal programs cannot be expected to provide ideas which will dramatically improve education for the gifted nor to provide large quantities of money. The federal government can serve as a catalyst to ideas through research and demonstration programs and support of leadership training. A federal survey on the gifted has shown the degree to which existing legislation is not serving gifted children. In contrast, gifted and other children in the Soviet Union are exposed to an extracurricular program of clubs using notable professionals as instructors. Though gifted students can be found in every racial group and social class, the search for a culture free intelligence test is not useful. Development of the art of scrounging can lead to innovative ways to obtain funding. Educational support services such as research and development and training activities are an unrecognized part of the educational delivery system. A bill for educational assistance to gifted and talented children has been introduced but must overcome political hurdles before it is passed and appropriations gained. Political allies need to be nurtured in organizations such as the National Education Association. (DB)

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY RELATING TO GIFTED

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I heard many colorful definitions of government in my three years in Washington. They probably could be categorized PG, R, and X! One of those that stayed with me is that it is the means of gaining and using power so as to allocate scarce resources to particular purposes. The term power is a key one because influence in Washington or any governmental center depends on the ability to reward those who support you and punish those who oppose you. Such power is not often highly advertised because someone is always wanting those who have power to distribute it more widely or differently, a proposal rarely looked on with favor by those holding it. It is often overlaid with eloquence and ideas, and those persons in academic circles often delude themselves that it is the eloquence that is influencing decisions. That is not often the case, though it is clear that ideas clearly and consistently presented do have influence over the long run.

Before we can address the question of what the federal government can do for us, there is a prior question that needs to be answered. What are the major components for significant advance for education of the gifted? These probably can be stated briefly.

1. Innovative ideas and program suggestions. How can we break through current patterns?

2. A means for getting such ideas visible so that others can see a demonstration of their merit.

3. We need leadership persons who can generate such ideas and be in positions where they can do something about them.

4. We need some easy means of communicating good ideas back and forth among the faithful and to educators in general.

With those thoughts in mind, what can we then ask of the federal government?

What Federal Programs Will Not Provide

It is a good idea to review what we should not expect Washington to do for us in order to get a firm grasp on reality. I speak not just about the current problems of education support at the national level but what should be true for the foreseeable future. It is always tempting when one is frustrated about a situation to hope that some power, supernatural or natural, will swoop down and provide us with a solution. One of the first things we can be certain of is that no magical federal solution will emerge for our difficulties. The idea or ideas that will dramatically improve the education for the gifted will have to come from those closely aligned to the problem area, educators or lay people. It is not the function of government, in my opinion, to provide the ideas, but rather to provide the means by which such ideas can be stimulated and implemented.

Neither need we consider seriously the proposition that the federal government will pour down huge sums of money so that community after community will be able to try out all sorts of possible solutions to our problems. Experience with Title I, ESEA, and tight budgets has cured us of our temptation of trying that approach. The gifted would surely not be the first in line if that approach were to be tried again.

But we do have a right to expect some action. For one thing, the federal government has shown with its support for programs for handi-

capped children that it can be a powerful catalyst in bringing into full bloom new ideas and concepts through research and demonstration programs. Such R & D programs cost little money -- it is only the full scale implementation that costs money.

It can certainly support the preparation of leadership persons to receive advanced training. Through such advanced training, such persons gain the opportunity to think broadly about opportunities and program ideas but also to obtain the professional license, the doctorate, to spread these thoughts widely. Again, our experience with the handicapped is that the cadre of leadership personnel brought into the field through PL 88-164 has been the basis for major and productive program changes for the handicapped in the past decade. What was once a "thin red line" of lonely experts is now a young and bustling army of people elbowing forward to present their own ideas on how things can be done better. That, of course, is just what the gifted field needs, and it is what the federal government has well within its power and experience to do well.

The last half decade of the Sixties can be used as a horrible example of what happens under conditions of no stimulation. With the school systems and the society agonizing over the problems of desegregation, busing, budgets, etc. and with no means for outside stimulation, the field of the gifted has remained an area of little growth; with the exception of tiny pockets stimulated by dynamic individual efforts, it has been an undeveloped area of enormous potential.

Even the very small efforts stimulated by the passage of the bill that called for a report to Congress on the status of the gifted have resulted in a number of interesting efforts within the executive branch and give promise for more activity given greater encouragement.

Federal Survey on the Gifted

One of the requirements in the development of federal legislation is the assembling of a large number of available facts related to the issue at hand -- in this case, the education of gifted and talented. A series of reports and studies was one of the first steps taken as the Executive branch and the Congress both became more interested in the problem. One of the results of that interest was the holding of twelve regional hearings throughout the United States with people interested in testifying coming forward and speaking on the issue. A total of 295 witnesses appeared in person and another 260-some provided written testimony regarding what they felt were the needs of the gifted. In addition, there was a survey of what the states are now doing with regard to federal legislation.

One of the clearest answers from the State Survey is that existing legislation is not substantially serving the programs for gifted children. As reported by Gallagher and his associates, the various titles under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act were hardly being used at all for projects for gifted children. 62% of the states were not using any federal legislation at all for projects in this regard and only Title III was being used, the supplementary educational

projects were being used by more than ten states. The Title V which was supposed to strengthen state department activity was used to purchase personnel in only three states. So it is clear that if we want to do something for the gifted, we will have to focus specifically on that particular group of youngsters. This is identical to the finding of other areas of exceptionality.

When the states themselves were asked what barriers to action they felt in further expanding programs for the gifted, they basically has two major complaints: one is the level of financial support for these programs (over 20 states have programs for the gifted on the books) and second, the existence of other more pressing priorities. What this highlights is what those of us working for the gifted have known for a long time, and that is while it is seen as an important long-range problem to the society, it doesn't have the immediate crisis element to it that tends to get legislative or executive action right now.

I was once told that the gifted is a cold-blooded issue in a warm-blooded town. Washington responds to crisis rather than long-range issues, and the gifted can hardly qualify as an immediate crisis, "we are going to burn the country down", type of issue. It gives one pause to remember that the flurry of government interest in the late 50's came in response to the Sputnik crisis or pseudo-crisis and placed the issue of the education of the gifted on the level of national survival. Well, it is an issue of national survival in the long-run and

we need to recognize it. When Khrushchev said he was going to bury us, he really wasn't referring to a nuclear holocaust but to the fact that he believed that the Soviet Union would defeat us because it knew where it was going and how to use its resources to get there.

Speaking of Russia . . .

The Soviet Gifted

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas of last year, I had the honor, with 11 other Americans, of visiting the Soviet Union and looking at some of the special programs for handicapped children. While we were there, however, we also explored with them some of the strategies or approaches that they take with their gifted and talented youngsters. In particular, we talked with some of the high officials in their Academy of Pedagogical Sciences that had expressed a particular interest in this area. Their comments were most interesting, and I will try to summarize some of them for you.

They said that they had been getting some considerable pressure from parents who claimed they had gifted children and asked for special educational opportunities or special programs. They said much of this pressure seemed to be coming from university parents, and sometimes they wonder whether the parents were not merely calling attention to their own giftedness rather than having a genuine interest in their child. Nevertheless, the official conceded that there was a real conflict between the desire to provide equal education for all in the Soviet Union, and providing for those special talents and intellectual gifts that are needed in a modern technological society.

One of the most interesting devices that I observed there in dealing with this issue is the very extensive development of what the Soviets called circles or clubs. Essentially these are extracurricular activities taking place after the school day is completed, from perhaps 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon until 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening. From the ages of 10 to 14, all, and I do mean all, of the youngsters belong to what is known as the Young Pioneers, and they are expected to participate in these circles or clubs. There is a wide range of activities available, from art and ballet to science and mathematics clubs, and the youngster does have some choice in what he will participate in. In the particular Pioneer Palace we visited, which is a kind of super YMCA in Moscow, youngsters come to these Circles which are led by professionals. For the ballet course, there are staff members from the various ballet companies in Moscow. For the art courses, some of the artists from the Moscow Art Institute are instructors. They are even able to get some of the cosmonauts to teach the space science clubs.

All of these circles that we observed had a sense of excitement about them that stemmed from enthusiastic and skilled models that the talented child felt comfortable with and could identify with. We have had a number of autobiographical reports of how highly gifted or talented individuals are turned on or excited by personal contact with a dedicated and committed professional and often make their choice of their future life work as a result of having had that kind of personal contact, and by picking up the infectious enthusiasm of the really

competent professional. It is that kind of enthusiasm that one can hope will come out of the innovative and exciting Explorers program that is being supported by Hal Lyon in the Office of Gifted and Talented in the U. S. Office of Education.

This is an example of one type of approach that would seem to have some real possibilities for the gifted — the mentor approach. This is the bringing together of adults willing to give some of their time to work individually with gifted teenagers. This can be done outside the school or outside school time. All such a program needs is space, a leader to coordinate such efforts and the social engineering or traffic management ability to administer such a program.

It is one example of the kind of low cost experimental program that can be supported through federal initiative. What numerous communities would like to know is how do you locate the adults? How do you arrange space? What children should be chosen? And a dozen other practical questions that can be answered through demonstration.

Talent Misplaced or Talent Erased

One special area that needs program attention is the talented who come from culturally different circumstances. One of the many myths surrounding gifted children is that Gifted students come only from highly educated and professional families.

It is of course true that many of these youngsters do come from such backgrounds, and it would be surprising if they did not. This family background provides the maximum possible environment for the

nourishment of such intellectual growth, but what is equally important is that highly talented and gifted students can be found in every racial group, ethnic group, and social class.

One of the more confusing and fruitless searches available in the field of educational measurement has been the search for a culture-free intelligence test which would avoid the cultural biases of the usual IQ test. It should be recognized that the assumption made by culture-free tests is that intelligence may be mislaid but not destroyed. Most of these efforts have centered on trying to find tests on which students from culturally different circumstances or from lower social classes would do as well as their more advantaged colleagues. One can have compassion for this psychological sleight-of-hand attempt to bring fairness to an unfair world.

The hard facts are that unfavorable environment and circumstances do not provide the linguistic development necessary for success in a complex culture whose very nature is built around verbal and linguistic systems. Such talent suppressed is not easily regained. The embarrassing question not easily handled by those interested in culture-free tests is, even if it were possible to construct such an instrument, what would we do with it once we had it? Surely such a test will not predict educational success when that success depends on the very verbal development that has been carefully excised from the test.

There are only three major dimensions that can be changed in a differentiated program for the gifted. One can change the <u>content</u> of

the material, the pedagogy or way in which it is presented, or the environmental setting in which the children receive their education. Whatever special programs we devise, they are bound to affect one or more of these particular dimensions. We need to think, and have the catalytic support of federal efforts, to consider what special kinds of modifications need to be made for the disadvantaged gifted.

With the state of funding the way it is these days, it appears that we are going to have to rediscover the fine art of scrounging. This was a highly descriptive term in World War II and afterwards, denoting the ability of people to find resources in all sorts of unusual places. When I was in the Navy we had another term for it; it was called "Midnight Requisition". While we probably should not be about too much Midnight Requisition, we should be alert to any and all possible openings that can occur that can provide a wedge to excite the public, to interest them, to demonstrate what can be done in a program that has some imagination and drive.

One of the best recent examples I have seen of the characteristics of scrounging is provided by an imaginative bureaucrat, Bob Radford from the Regional HEW office in Seattle. He is proposing to the Department of Defense that some of their military air transport planes might very well be used to carry some of these youngsters on these exploration teams to expedition sites in various parts of the world. If the money spent in travel can be picked up by military air transport, then there is that much more money left over to be spent on new

children coming from inner-city programs who can have their first exciting experience with a model that provides them with a pattern of behavior and a style of life that could be well imitated when they return to the United States.

Educational Support Services

While in Washington, I found that people who do not deal directly with education still conceptualize education as being a very simple process, primarily involving the direct contact of a teacher and a student. The notion that education is a complex business rivalling in its organizational needs large corporations, labor unions, and other major elements of our society, is very imperfectly understood. It is useful in this regard to try to help the public and decision-makers distinguish between two major parts of the educational effort. One is the direct delivery of educational services, which means in fact the direct contact of the student with teachers, books, movies, the instructional base of the educational process. But the second is the various supportive educational services needed in order that that delivery occur at the right place, at the right time, and with quality. Indeed, the direct services and supportive services of a program area are like the two horses pulling a carriage. They must advance together if the trip is to go smoothly. Unless 10% to 15% of the total budget is provided to supportive services of the total program, it is unlikely that anyone will have much of a quality education program.

1. Research and development to provide us with more effective programs and procedures.

2. Training activities to guarantee a continuing flow of quality manpower.

3. Demonstration activities to illustrate new and better programs.

4. A planning and evaluation effort to help allocate resources wisely.

5. A communications system to help educators to keep in touch with new developments.

The attractive part of placing a major emphasis on supportive services is that they provide us with the essence of quality education without the huge major costs that are inherent in the problem of the direct delivery of educational services to huge numbers of children.

If we have learned anything in the last few years in research, it is that major research findings and major curriculum developments require significant resources to be allocated to these problems, so part of any support bill should be enough resources to allow for significant research and development efforts in this major area.

One of the requirements for getting useful federal or state action is some degree of realism. We, for example, are fond of talking about providing more teachers who are skilled in working with gifted and talented students. However, the report by Martinson, reviewing the current status of gifted children, suggests that at a modest level of of 2% of the students being considered gifted, a minimum of 44,000 specially trained teachers would be needed to deal with that number of youngsters. It is quite clear from the lack of training facilities --

turning out a handful -- and the total impossibility of training a number of that magnitude, that the focus of the program has to be on something other than the training of the classroom teacher per se, rather than complain about a shortage of money.

In terms of evaluation, no program has been as extensively evaluated as some of the programs for gifted children, notably the ones in the state of Illinois. In that state, an outstanding job of evaluation has been done by House and his associates at the University of Illinois. Reviewing the entire state program, they reached the following conclusion: that the Illinois plan can be judged successful in terms of its reimbursement to local districts and training programs.

Another major aspect of the program was the development of a large number of demonstration centers. In this situation, it was felt the demonstration centers were successful in bringing to greater awareness the programs for the gifted and general acceptance in attitude, but not with the important goal of adoption of new techniques in the other districts.

As a result of these findings, the basic orientation of these demonstration centers was changed from one of passivity and waiting for people to come and view the program to one where they aggressively provide services to the regional areas that they serve so that they can attempt to get their message across in a stronger way.

Legislative Action

One of the standard responses of people to the possibility of Government helping out is that we should pass a law. It looks easy; people seem to be doing it all the time. Well,it isn't easy. Of the approximately 2,000 bills submitted during any Congressional session, only about 100 receive any serious consideration. Those that do receive consideration often have powerful interests vigorously supporting their efforts.

Earlier this year Senator Javits of New York introduced the Senate bill S 874: The Gifted and Talented Children's Educational Assistance Act. Senator Javits introduced this on behalf of himself and co-sponsor Senator Williams of New Jersey and thirteen other members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. This bill,which would become a part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, has four major parts.

> First, it would establish a National Clearinghouse on Gifted and Talented children to obtain and disseminate information on identification, counseling, and education of such children.
>
> Second, it would authorize grants to the states for educational programs for gifted and talented children through the high school level.
>
> Third, it would provide for the training of personnel for the education of gifted and talented children.
>
> Fourth, it would establish within the National Institute of Education research and demonstration projects for the education of gifted and talented children.

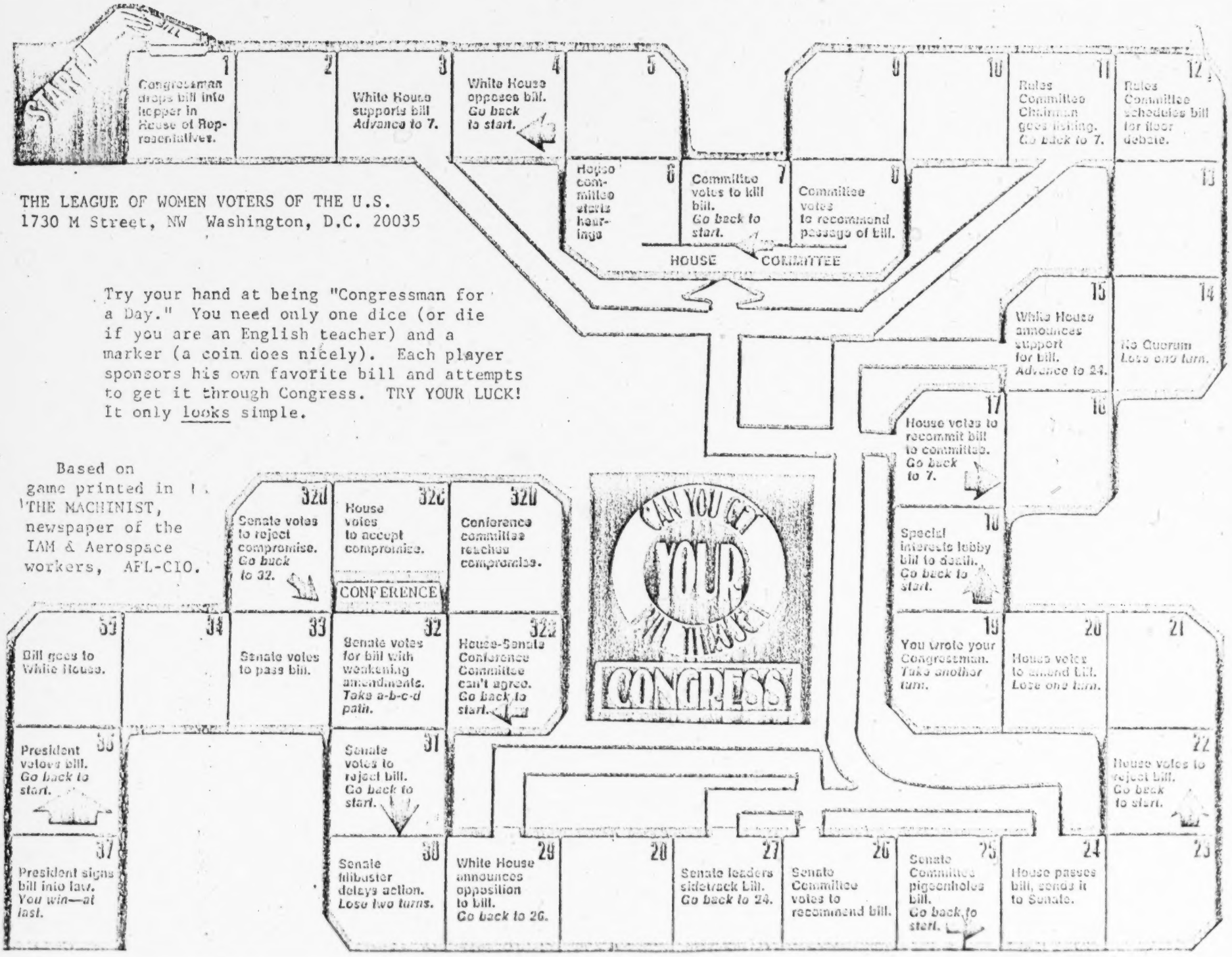
However, the submission of a bill for action is one thing and having it become law is something else again. I recently saw a little game printed by the League of Women Voters entitled "Can you get your

bill through Congress?" If you have a die and some markers, you can play the game of moving from space one to space thirty-seven. In the process you run into many hair-raising instructions such as "White House opposes bill; go back to Start"; Committee votes to kill bill; go back to Start"; "House votes to recommit bill to Committee; go back ten spaces"; "Senate Committee pigeonholes bill; go back to Start"; "Senate leaders side-track bill; go back three spaces"; "House votes to reject compromise of Conference Committee; go back five spaces"; and finally,"President vetoes bill; go back to Start".

What is most incompletely understood by those unfamiliar with Washington or any state capital is that even after such a magnificent effort that could be culminated in a law is passed, it still has to go through another extraordinarily complex process of gaining appropriations so that any part of the bill could be implemented. It doesn't take much of an insider into Washington these days to suggest that the probabilities of this bill becoming law in this session are not too great. What we can expect, however, is a heightened understanding of both the problems and the opportunities connected with the attention and interest that new bills can generate.

Where Are Our Allies?

Where is all the help and support going to come from to help pass legislation? If there is anything that is certain, it is that a small organization such as TAG or any comparable organization for the gifted is not by itself going to be able to mount a major legislative program



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE U.S.
1730 M Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20035

Try your hand at being "Congressman for a Day." You need only one dice (or die if you are an English teacher) and a marker (a coin does nicely). Each player sponsors his own favorite bill and attempts to get it through Congress. TRY YOUR LUCK! It only looks simple.

Based on game printed in THE MACHINIST, newspaper of the IAM & Aerospace workers, AFL-CIO.

without help from some powerful allies. The first requirement would seem to be some major political sponsors who need to be convinced that this is a program that will serve them well and serve the country well. These sponsors can run very important interference for the bill that is being considered.

Fortunately for us, it is not necessary that the majority of legislators take intimate and close interest in this bill. Four or five key members of key committees is often sufficient as far as political sponsorship is concerned. But the need for allies does not stop with the notion of political allies. The politicians often want to know who are your other friends, because a program such as this is bound to influence the school as a whole, not just the group of youngsters whom we are concerned with.

They would almost certainly ask their contacts in such organizations as the National Education Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the chief state school officers, the PTA, others of the major lobbying groups in education, what they thought of such legislation; unless that legislation has already been discussed with these people, they would probably get a noncommittal or neutral answer at best; so some useful allies in the general education field are available if we can convince them that our cause is a just and important one, and some powerful opponents if we cannot convince them.

In the professional fields, such organizations as the American Psychological Association and the American Sociological Association

loom large as important figures influencing and guiding major trends in these important social sciences. Neither of these organizations, however, have very much impact or are considered useful political allies in Washington. As a matter of fact, vocational education has a much more potent influence on legislation than either of these or many other more "distinguished" or academically respectable professional organizations that do not play a very active lobbying role.

The possible exception to this general rule that scientists are not terribly helpful politically would be in very prestigious organizations such as the National Academy of Sciences. An endorsement of legislation by such an august body would surely help any proposal receive more favorable consideration.

Basically what this seems to mean is that if we are interested in major and important legislative breakthroughs, we must pay the price. Part of that price is to suffer many strangers to join us in that effort and even to assume positions of leadership in the effort. There is a natural tendency to say we are the experts on gifted children and we should be the ones who will decide. What are you, a professor of physics or an expert on cost analysis, doing in an education area that really belongs to us? Such narrow territorial defense would surely defeat any important proposal that we would like to make. We need many friends and supporters and cannot achieve that goal by acting as a very small exclusive club.

In summary, we need innovative ideas, the means for making them visible, the leadership people for carrying them forward, and an effective and quick communications medium. We can depend upon our own expertise for the ideas but we can ask the federal government to help us in our research, training and communications efforts. Next year, as TAG President, I hope to do what I can to help such matters along.